

This is a continuation application of USSN 09/721,859 filed November 25, 2000

Page Stacking and Binding Mechanism

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FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The following invention relates to a page binding support tray having vibratory page alignment. More particularly, though not exclusively, the invention relates to a page binding support tray to receive a number of pre-edge glued, uniformly sized printed pages and to ensure alignment of those pages prior to pressing the pre-glued edges together.

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It is well known to print individual pages of a volume to be bound, then to place all of the printed pages into a stack, to then crop one or more edges of the stack and to then bind the pages together by applying a binding adhesive to an edge of the stack of pages. This is a time consuming and labour-intensive process.

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It would be more efficient to provide pre-cut, uniformly sized pages, to print one or both surfaces of each page and to provide a strip of binding adhesive to one or both surfaces of each page adjacent the edge to be bound, to accurately place the printed and pre-glued pages in a stack, and to press the pages adjacent the spine so that the adhesive binds the page edges together.

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It would also be desirable to provide a page binding support tray having vibratory page alignment to ensure alignment of the pages prior to pressing.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

It is the object of the invention to provide a page binding support tray having vibratory page alignment.

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DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

There is disclosed herein an apparatus comprising:

a support tray for receiving a stack of printed pages having binding adhesive applied adjacent an edge of at least one of the pages, and

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a vibrator interacting with the tray so as to induce vibration therein to assist in alignment of the pages of the stack.

Preferably the tray has a support surface having one corner that is lower than other portions of the support surface.

Preferably the tray has at least two side walls extending substantially perpendicularly to each other and against which perpendicular edges of the pages bear for alignment of the pages within the stack.

Preferably vibration of the tray is dampened by dampers.

5 Preferably the tray is supported by a frame.

Preferably the tray is suspended from the frame.

Preferably the dampers extend from the tray to the frame.

Preferably the vibrator is a subsonic vibrator.

10 Preferably means are provided to alter a level of the support surface of the tray so as to ensure that an upper page of the stack is situated at a predefined level for interaction with an edge-pressing device.

There is further disclosed herein a method of aligning pages in a stack of pages, the method including the steps of:

15 delivering pages one upon another to a tray so as to form a stack of pages, and during and/or after said step of delivering, inducing vibration in the tray.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred forms of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

20 Fig. 1 is a schematic illustration of a page conveyed along a path and passing a pagewidth print head and an adhesive applicator;

Fig. 2 is a schematic illustration of a page having an adhesive strip adjacent one edge thereof;

Fig. 3 is a table, schematically illustrating the principles of five alternative adhesive application methods;

25 Fig. 4 is a schematic elevational view of a number of pages with all but the top page having a strip of adhesive applied to an upper surface adjacent to an edge to be bound;

Fig. 5 is a schematic elevational view of a stack of pages with all but the bottom page having a strip of adhesive applied to a lower surface thereof adjacent to an edge to be bound;

30 Fig. 6 is a schematic elevational view of a stack of pages with a first part of a two-part adhesive applied to the upper surface of all but the top page and a second part of a two-part adhesive applied to the bottom surface of all but the bottom page,

Fig. 7 is a schematic perspective view of a page binding support tray situated immediately down-line of the adhesive applicator,

Fig. 8 is a schematic cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray of Fig. 7 showing a first page having a strip of adhesive adjacent its edge at an upper surface en route thereto,

Fig. 9 is a schematic cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray and page of Fig. 8, with the page closer to its rest position,

Fig. 10 is a schematic cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray and page of Figs. 8 and 9, with the page at rest thereon,

Figs. 11, 12 and 13 are schematic cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray showing a second page as it progresses to rest upon the first page,

Fig. 14 is a schematic cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray having a number of pages resting thereon to be bound, with all but the top page having an upwardly facing strip of adhesive adjacent an edge thereof,

Fig. 15 shows the progression of a page-binding press toward the edge of the stacked pages,

Fig. 16 shows the page binding support tray with pages bound along their edge by application of the binding press,

Fig. 17 is a cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray having a number of individual volumes resting thereon, with a top volume ready to be pressed,

Fig. 18 is a schematic cross-sectional elevational view of the page binding support tray and volumes of Fig. 17, with all volumes having been pressed, one upon another,

Fig. 19 is a schematic perspective illustration of a number of volumes having been bound,

Fig. 20 is schematic elevational view of a page binding support tray having an alternative press,

Figs. 21 and 22 are schematic perspective views of a portion of the alternative press of Fig. 20, and

Fig. 23 is a schematic elevational view of a page binding support tray having an alternative press at a trailing edge of a stack of pages to be bound.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In Fig. 1 of the accompanying drawings there is schematically depicted a path 10 of a page 11 passing through a printer incorporating an adhesive applicator.

Page 11 is driven to the right at a driving station D. Driving station D might comprise a pair of opposed pinch rollers 12 as shown. The page 11 then passes a printing station P and then an adhesive application station A. As an alternative, the adhesive application station A might precede the printing station P, but it is preferred that the adhesive application station follow the printing station so that adhesive on the page 11 does not clog the print head or print heads at printing station P.

For single sided page printing, the printing station P might comprise a single print head 13. The print head 13 might be a pagewidth drop on demand ink jet print head. Alternatively, the print head might be that of a laser printer or other printing device. Where the page 11 is to be printed on both sides, a pair of opposed print heads 13 might be provided.

Where the print heads 13 are ink jet print heads, wet ink 15 on page 11 might pass through the adhesive application station A.

An air cushion 14 at either side of the page 11 as it passes printing station P can be provided by means of air passing through an air flow path provided in each print head 13.

The adhesive application station A can comprise an adhesive applicator 16 at one or both sides of the page 11, depending upon which side or sides of the page to which adhesive is to be applied.

As shown in Fig. 2, a page 11 having matter printed thereon by printing station P also includes a strip 17 of adhesive as applied at adhesive application station A.

As can be seen, the strip 17 can be applied adjacent to the leading edge 27 of page 11. The application of strip 17 adjacent to the leading edge 28 is suitable for those situations where the adhesive applicator does not contact the page, or contacts the page at a velocity accurately matching that of the page 11 as it passes the adhesive application station A. Alternatively, the strip 17 could be applied adjacent to the trailing edge 28 of page 11 and this position might be more suited to adhesive applicators that make some form of physical contact with the page 11 as it passes adhesive application station A.

A margin 29 of about 1 to 2.5mm is desirable between the strip 17 and edge 27 or 28 of page 11.

Various methods of applying adhesive to the page 11 are envisaged, some of which are schematically depicted in Fig. 3.

Method 1 in Fig. 3 is a non-contact method of applying adhesive to the moving page 11. In this method, a stationary adhesive applicator 16 sprays adhesive on one side of page

11 as it passes the applicator. The adhesive applicator might be formed integrally with the print head 13 or might be located upstream or after the print head.

Method 2 also applies adhesive to one side of the moving page 11, although this time using a contact method. An adhesive applicator 16a is pivotally mounted about a fixed pivot point and is caused to move at a speed matching that at which the page 11 passes through the adhesive application station. A reaction roller 30 comes into contact with the underside of page 11 as the adhesive applicator 16a applies adhesive to the page.

Method 3 applies adhesive to both sides of a page 11 as it passes through the adhesive application station. A pair of pivotally mounted adhesive applicators 16aa move pivotally at a speed corresponding with that at which the page 11 passes through the adhesive application station. They both come into contact with the page 11 and mutually counteract each other's force component normal to the page 11.

Method 4 employs a pair of adhesive applicator rollers 16aaa spaced from either side of the page 11 until activated to apply adhesive whereupon they move toward and touch the page 11, leaving a strip of adhesive 17 at either side of the page. The rollers would mutually counteract each other's force component normal to page 11.

Method 5 employs a pair of adhesive spray applicators 16aaa, one at either side of page 11. The applicators do not contact page 11. Each applicator would apply one part of a two-part adhesive to a respective side of page 11 so as to apply strips 17a and 17b. Like Method 1, Method 5 could employ an adhesive applicator formed integrally with the print head. That is, a channel for the flow of one part of a two-part adhesive might be provided in each print head.

Also, the use of a two-part adhesive could be beneficial in situations where there might be some delay in the printing/binding operation. For example, if there were a computer software or hardware malfunction part-way through a printing/binding operation, the use of a two-part adhesive could provide sufficient time within which to rectify the problem and complete the binding process.

Fig. 4 illustrates a stack of pages 11 with all but the top page provided with an adhesive strip 17 at an upper surface adjacent one edge to be bound.

An alternative is depicted in Fig. 5 wherein all but the bottom page has an adhesive strip 17 applied to its bottom surface adjacent an edge to be bound.

In Fig. 6, a stack of pages is shown with part A of a two-part adhesive applied to the upper surface of all but the top page and the second part of the two-part adhesive applied to the bottom surface of all but the bottom page.

5 When the stacks of pages of Figs. 4 and 5 are pressed together, adhesion of the pages occurs once the adhesive 17 has dried.

When the pages 11 of Fig. 6 are pressed together, the respective parts of the two-part adhesive in strips 17a and 17b combine so as to react and set.

10 Where print head 13 is an ink jet print head, and non-contact adhesive application Methods 1 and 5 are employed, the adhesive strip 17 is applied to page 11 before ink on the page passing through the adhesive application station 10 has dried. Air passing through air gap 14 accelerates the drying process. That is, adhesive is applied to the page as it passes out of the print head 13. The velocity of the page 11 does not change as a result of the application of adhesive strip 17.

15 Where the strip 17 is applied alongside the leading edge 27 of the page 11, any alteration to the velocity of page 11 would adversely affect print quality. Hence application of adhesive strip 17 alongside the leading edge 27 is only possible without adversely affecting print quality using non-contact adhesive application methods or methods where the velocity of the adhesive applicator coming into contact with the page is very close to that of page 11.

20 Where the adhesive strip 17 is applied alongside the trailing edge 28 of page 11, a non-contact method or method of very close speed matching is also desired. For example, if the speed of the adhesive applicator of Methods 2 to 4 was faster than that at which the page 11 was passing the print head, the page could buckle.

25 A most desirable embodiment of the present invention would use a two-part adhesive and would incorporate the adhesive applicators within the print heads themselves. That is, a passage or passages for the flow of adhesive through the print head would be space and cost-effective.

30 The likelihood of adhesive "gumming" and blocking such channels would be diminished where a two-part adhesive was employed. That is, only one part of the two-part adhesive would pass through any particular channel or channels of the print head.

Where respective parts of a two-part adhesive are applied to opposed sides of pages 11, those respective parts could pass through dedicated channels in the respective print head

at either side of the page. This would greatly reduce the likelihood of adhesive blockages in the flow channels.

The adhesive or respective parts of a two-part adhesive can be provided in a chamber of a replaceable ink cartridge providing ink to the print head.

5 The print head 13 should be as close a possible to the pinch rollers 12. This is because the rollers 12 provide a mechanical constraint upon the page 11 to enable accuracy of printing.

10 The pinch rollers 12, print heads 13 and adhesive applicator 16 are illustrated in Fig. 7 alongside a page support tray 18. That is, the page support tray 18 receives pages 11 that exit the paper path 10. The tray 18 is suspended from a frame 21 by means of respective dampers 22 at each corner. The dampers could be elastomeric dampers or small hydraulic or pneumatic cylinders for example. The floor of tray 11 is not level. It has a lower-most corner 23 beneath which there is provided a vibrator 19. The vibrator 19 might be a subsonic vibrator (ie a vibrator having a frequency below 20hz) or an out-of-balance
15 electric motor for example. A binding press 20 is situated above the tray 18 over the at-rest position of the respective leading edge of the pages 11. However, as an alternative, the binding press 20 could be provided so as to be situated over the trailing edge of the pages.

20 In Fig. 8 a first page 11 is shown in its trajectory toward tray 18. Page 11 has a strip of adhesive 17 on its upper surface adjacent the leading edge. The page 11 might tend to catch a pocket of air beneath it as it floats into position and the leading edge 28 might strike the vertical wall 31 as shown in Fig. 9. The vibrations of the tray 18 as a result of the vibrator 19 will cause the page 11 to come to rest with edge 27 alongside the lower edge of wall 23 and with a right angled edge of the page touching the front wall 32 of tray 18.

25 In Fig. 11, a second page 11 is shown in its trajectory toward tray 18. In a motion similar to that of the first page, the second page comes to rest upon the first page in a position perfectly aligned therewith. The second page comes to rest into the position depicted in Fig. 13. Where the pages have the adhesive strip 17 applied to the upper surface, the final page is provided without any adhesive and it comes to rest at the top of the stack as depicted in Fig. 14. If, instead, the majority of pages 11 had the adhesive strip 17
30 applied to their bottom surface, the first page (ie the page at the bottom of the stack) would have no adhesive applied to it. This would be suitable for multiple binding compressions.

As shown in Fig. 15, the binding press 20 commences downward movement toward the stack of pages 11 over the aligned adhesive strips 17. The stack is then compressed to a bound volume 24 as shown in Fig. 16.

5 It should be noted that no subsequent edge trimming of the bound volume is required so long as standard-sized pages 11 had initially been used. This is because the vibrator 19 has aligned the pages into the lower-most corner 23 of tray 18 as described earlier.

In Figs. 17 and 18, multiple volume 24 are shown stacked on upon another with the upper-most volumes being progressively compressed by repeated application of press 20.

10 The binding press 20 is shown schematically in the Figures and could be pneumatically or hydraulically driven, or could be driven by other mechanical means such as rack and pinion, electrical solenoid or otherwise. An alternative embodiment as depicted in Figs. 20, 21 and 22 incorporates a plurality of semicircular disks 20a each spaced apart, but fixedly mounted to a common rotatably driven shaft extending along an axis of rotation
15 26. Each disk 20a could pass through a respective vertical slot 32 formed in the end wall 31 of tray 18. That is, there would be as many vertical slots in wall 31 as there are disks 20a. The disks could commence in the orientation depicted in Fig. 21 and upon rotation of the shaft pivot to the orientation depicted in Figs. 20 and 22 so as to press down upon the pages.

20 The tray 18 might be provided with a floor of adjustable height so as to always present the top page in the tray closely to the pressing device. This would reduce noise levels by minimizing the stroke length of the binding press 20. Furthermore, the binding press 20 could be fixed and the tray could be pushed upwardly toward it to press and bind the pages.

25 The floor of tray 18 can be driven so as to move downwardly as each page 11 is delivered thereto. This would ensure that the upper-most page always resided at the same level. This could result in reduced noise of movement of the press bar 20 as it need not move very far to effectively bind the pages.

30 Where the pages have applied thereto adhesive strips alongside the trailing edge 28, the press would be provided to the left as shown in Fig. 23. In this embodiment, a pressing bar 20aa is provided. Any pressing arrangement could however be provided.